

REFORMATION IN HUNGARY

HISTORIOGRAPHY, RESEARCH PROBLEMS, METHODOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION: FROM PATRONS TO COMMUNITY

In 1526 the Ottomans defeated the Hungarian army near Mohács, causing the collapse of the medieval kingdom of Hungary. King Louis II also died in the battle, resulting in a 15 year-long fight for the throne. Ferdinand (Habsburg) I and John (Szapolyai) I were both elected by the estates of the realm and legally crowned, and the Ottoman Empire sporadically interfered in the battle between the two kings. In 1541 the Turkish invaded Buda, the capital of the country, leading to the permanent split of Hungary into three parts, which lasted for centuries. The southern and middle territories were occupied by the Ottomans (Ottoman Hungary), while King Ferdinand's reign was consolidated in the northern and western parts (Kingdom of Hungary), and in the East the kingdom of John I became the Principality of Transylvania. A border castle system was created on the borders of the territories occupied by the Ottomans, where there was continuous battling even in peaceful times. These three parts of the country also followed different paths in the Reformation. During the Turkish occupation the traditional church system almost completely ceased to exist. The new teachings could be spread freely, thus in this area the followers of the Helvetic tradition dominated (the Reformed, Calvinist denomination was later also called "Hungarian religion"). In the Kingdom of Hungary the Lutheran Reformation prevailed at first, then in the seventeenth century the Habsburgs reinstated the Roman Catholic majority with systematic re-Catholicisation. In Transylvania, the princes mostly followed tolerant religious policies, as a result of which, besides the other denominations, even the antitrinitarian (Unitarian) branch of the Reformation became strong. Uniquely in Europe, it was able to organise a folk church and receive legal recognition.

Reformation research in Hungary does not tend to engage in theoretical and methodological debate. Of the monograph series entitled *Humanizmus és Reformáció* [Humanism and Reformation]¹ launched in 1973, only one volume contains extensive theoretical and methodological guidelines, namely the study of Ferenc Szakály (1942-1999), whose work therefore this study will deal with. Typically, Szakály was the first scholar to elaborate in detail on the 'market town theo-

1 Csepregi: 'Lutherstatue', 200-1.

ry' (1995), even though to some extent he discards this notion. Apart from Szakály, only Katalin Péter (b. 1937) – and her followers, Gabriella Erdélyi (b. 1971), Antal Molnár (b. 1969) and Sándor Őze (b. 1963) – seem to be interested in Reformation theories, others tend to keep their thoughts on methodology to themselves. Apart from this pragmatism, the literature in Hungary has evolved, surprisingly, in parallel to the international research trends, following them almost without delay.

A reformáció jegyében [In the Spirit of the Reformation], the literary history overview by János Horváth (1878-1961), is characterised by the character-oriented approach which dominated the first half of the twentieth century (it is structured around magnate patrons and Maecenas circles).² The concept of 'market town Reformation' appeared a few years later, starting from 1957 (simultaneously with the boom in German town research).

Representatives of the market town theory – Tibor Klaniczay (1923-1992), László Makkai (1914-1989), Ferenc Szakály – sought to find a solution for multiple disadvantages and deficiencies. On the one hand, the alleged relatively low degree of urbanisation in Hungary, and on the other, the significant lack of data due to the destruction of archives and the lack of educational institutions (such as universities and printers) interfered with the study of the Reformation in Hungary as an urban development, and prevented the extension of the relevant source base with methods used in urban research. Moreover, the archives of the privileged medieval town chain from Sopron to Braşov proved to be mostly inaccessible at the time. These scholars' thesis stated that in the Hungarian settlement structure the middle and southern part of the country lacked "real towns (*civitates*)", hence the market towns (*oppida*) assumed urban functions, and their citizens (mostly occupied in the beef and wine trade) became the basis of the Reformation, its key shaping force. For decades, nobody thought of questioning the hypothesis. Historians considered it a valid interpretive framework, as if it were evidence.

Retrospectively, one has the impression that although the market town theory, which tried to connect the economic and spiritual processes, can go hand in hand with the Marxist approach to history, it was not the demands of Marxism which played a major role in its creation but the needs and characteristics of Hungarian historical research, primarily the above mentioned pragmatic aspects. This is the reason why the thesis did not become normative before 1989, and why it outlived the political changes after 1989 by a good few years. Despite the theory's tendency to greatly simplify and generalise, it had a positive effect on the research focusing on the Reformation of some market towns, without significantly interfering with the formulation of questions regarding other aspects, especially concerning the history of ideas. The main added value of the Klaniczay-Makkai school is

2 Horváth: *A reformáció jegyében*.

that it goes beyond the activities of characters, reformers and patrons we know by name, and on whom historiography had so far concentrated (including János Horváth) and tries to view the Reformation as the cause of a certain community.

Although the print production of Hungary could not be compared to the German pamphlet literature, bibliographical research significantly contributed to the broadening of the source base of the Reformation, and interestingly, this coincided with German research on towns and publishing. In 1971, the first volume of the *Régi magyarországi nyomtatványok* [Early Printings of Hungary] was published, which described products published before 1600. During the editing of this work a number of bibliographical questions were solved, and legendary myths found their rightful places. Thanks to the thoroughness of the preparation of the book and the conscientious work of the editors, the first volume of the series has hardly needed any amendments since. Despite all the shortcomings of the printing industry in Hungary, the primary way of passing down and retaining the sixteenth-century theological texts was clearly the press, not manuscripts. Questions like “how did they preach” or “how did they teach in the Hungarian Reformation” can be answered primarily based on the printed literature, in Hungary as in other countries, although the number of texts allows qualitative analytical methods more than quantitative ones.

Can the source base of the Reformation research in Hungary be further extended? On the level of literature probably not significantly, although interesting texts do appear from collections outside of Hungary from time-to-time, which have slipped the notice of nineteenth and twentieth-century source publishers. Further progress is possible primarily via methodological innovations and creative detours.³

In her research, Katalin Péter goes beyond the market town community, and analyses the Reformation of the peasant society, the *gemeiner Mann*, which is a field extremely poor in sources.⁴ Her source containing the largest amount of and most authentic data for this research⁵ is the church visiting record (*canonica visitatio*) of Esztergom, partly available in print. This originates from the period 1559 to 1562 and was ordered by the Archbishop of Esztergom, Miklós Oláh.⁶ The research focusing on this material in itself leads to surprising results: in sixteenth-century Hungary the principle of “whose realm, his religion” did not exist. Simple people (as individuals or as a community) could choose between the old and the new faith: they could question, doubt and decide. The patrons only interfered in exceptional cases, and they only influenced the process of choosing a priest with

3 Szakály: *Mezőváros és reformáció*, 16-27.

4 Péter: ‘Die Reformation in Ungarn’.

5 Péter: ‘The Way from the Church of the Priest’; Erdélyi: ‘Lay Agency’. Source publication: Bucko: *Reformné hnutie*, 121-255.

6 Miklós Oláh (Sibiu, 1493 – Bratislava, 1568): BBKL 6, 1171-4.

their support for schooling.⁷ This concept, emphasising community autonomy regarding religious issues, is supported by the history of mentalities research conducted by Gabriella Erdélyi, based on a much earlier source from a typically market town environment.⁸

It is necessary to turn back to the native theory of the Reformation research of Hungary, meaning the problem of the market town Reformation, which besides the above mentioned results, also left us with a few dangerous biases and hidden false axioms.

The use of the notion “market town Reformation” was problematic for decades, partly because it connected two terms. These should both have been first defined separately, but instead they were used to help explain each other. Thus, the “market town Reformation”, like a sort of *petitio principii*, simultaneously became a truth and a method, a working hypothesis to be supported by data and a seemingly obvious historical explanation substituting missing data. The first scholar who tried to define the list of market towns in question was Ferenc Szakály, but even he failed to define the group of phenomena which could be attributed to the effect of the Reformation. This shortcoming is painfully visible in the way he maintains the traditional “Franciscan Reformation hypothesis” without critique.⁹ According to the theory, most of the Hungarian reformers were socialised in the Franciscan Order. This possibility is only supported by indirect sources, however.¹⁰

To further describe the burdensome heritage of the market town Reformation theory, a variety of issues are mixed under this label. These include:

- a contrast between the Reformation of the lord and that of the town/village.
- the question of the Hungarian and German language border.
- the problem of the Turkish occupation and border castles in the Reformation in Hungary.
- the separation of the branches of the Reformation (especially the Lutheran and the Helvetic).

As illustrated by the above points, the real challenge, beyond the historiographical arbitrariness, is that the chain of towns between Sopron and Braşov, which is predominantly populated by ethnic Germans, had a privileged status. It was less exposed to Turkish attacks and was more receptive for the Lutheran branch of the Reformation. This contrasted with the middle, so-called “townless” part of the country, which was mostly populated by ethnic Hungarians and was occupied by the Turks or was full of border castles. The period in which this latter region developed into the centre for agricultural production coincided, surprisingly,

7 Kubinyi: ‘Stadt und Kirche’; Erdélyi: ‘Lay Agency’.

8 Erdélyi: *A Cloister on Trial*.

9 Szakály: *Mezőváros és reformáció*, 22, 28; Özge: *Reformation und Grenzgebiete*, 91-124.

10 Szűcs: ‘Die oppositionelle Strömung der Franziskaner’; Erdélyi: *Szökött szerzetesek*.

with it becoming the cradle of the Helvetic branch of the Reformation in Hungary. The description of these two different social environments by the opposite pair of “market town vs. real town” is obviously shallow and misleading. Based on fifty years of experience, it is clear that the “market town” framework has proved unsuitable for dealing with these issues. Some scholars see such tension between the complexities of the past and the restrictiveness of the theory that they completely avoid the “market town” approach.¹¹ Others still hope to gain something from the improved, more subtle version of the “market town Reformation”.

Antal Molnár has dedicated several volumes to the topic, but added a provocative title and a methodological introduction to only one of them, which is the *Mezőváros és katolicizmus* [Market town and Catholicism].¹² Molnár tries to simultaneously save and extend the inherited framework of the market town Reformation research, and for this he finds help in the German *Konfessionalisierung* theory. While Szakály still categorised Szeged and Gyöngyös, Hungarian towns within the occupied region which remained Catholic, as exceptions, Molnár considers these towns cases of the same paradigm. He includes the formation of Catholic denomination in the problem of “market town and Reformation”. According to his working hypothesis:

[...] the branch of religion, later organisation which best served the needs of the population won the competition for choosing a religion in each settlement, which could also be a market town. Hence the choice of denomination in each town depended solely on which of the possible religious branches provided a competitive supply at the time suitable for forming an institution.¹³

Considering the choice and formation of denominations as integral parts of the very same process, Molnár deduces the earlier sixteenth-century processes, which cannot be ascertained from the sources, from the phenomena of seventeenth-century institutionalisation. This method can be considered as extending the time frame. Following this logic, he assumes that if in a settlement in the occupied region there was a Franciscan abbey or an authentic Catholic priest, the spreading of the Reformation was not necessary. In fact, the religious and cultural life of the local Catholic society showed similar signs as the neighbouring Reformed communities.

Since the region and the period examined are the same, I also consider Sándor Őze's attempt to re-interpret the market town paradigm. Őze connects the

11 Erdélyi: *A Cloister on Trial*.

12 Molnár: *Mezőváros és katolicizmus*, 9-14.

13 Molnár: *Mezőváros és katolicizmus*, 13.

Reformation with the border castles instead of the market towns, since the place names of these two categories are mostly the same.¹⁴

The basic question of the early history of the Reformation in Hungary is the relationship between the community and the person reforming it. In the last decade, the most complex debate evolved around this topic. It became the most central problem in the research of both major transitions (first the Lutheran, then the Helvetic Reformation): who was the initiator, who defined the true teaching, who chose the path to be followed – the cleric or the congregation of lay people? In the latest studies there are examples of the preacher shaping the community with his thoughts, but also of the opposite: cases in which the qualified and talented spiritual leader accommodated the views of his congregation. Of course, there are also many counter examples lacking harmony, of priests turning their backs on their communities or being ousted by the people.¹⁵

Still, a model emerges which can resolve the above tensions and contradictions. The community supposedly entailed complicated personal structures, situations of imbalance and local power relations which did not necessarily reflect the tendencies prevailing on the country level and the preacher or reformer had to stand up to this challenge and find solutions to these problems. The secret of success was always the need to meet the high standards demanded on the part of the religious community for church ministry and service. Ready-made panels and rigid religious principles did not make the cleric successful, but led him to failure, even if he was a talented speaker or had a personal charm. However, if he was able to apply his knowledge of theological readings creatively and with sensitivity to problems, in other words if he was capable of intellectual performance, he would be able to become the leader of his community.

The relationship between key positions and key characters is especially interesting. The latter in this case are the “canonised” reformers, who the history of literature also considers early Hungarian authors. But what were the key positions in sixteenth-century Hungary? Were they privileged “real” towns which could be well defended militarily? Were they aristocratic courts, which János Horváth concentrated on? Or were they thriving market towns, according to the Makkai-Klaniczay-Szakály theory, or border castles controlling large areas, following the idea of Sándor Óze?

Border castle troops were not only ethnically and socially heterogeneous, but probably also ideologically. Still, I cannot let go of the thought that the dogmatist and bishop István Szegedi Kis¹⁶ must have considered Timișoara and Cenad as key border castle positions worth filling, as – with regards to influence, securi-

¹⁴ Óze: *Reformation und Grenzgebiete*, 81-9.

¹⁵ Csepregi: ‘Bund, Bundschuh, Verbundenheit’.

¹⁶ István Szegedi Kis (Szeged, 1505 – Ráckeve, 1572): RGG⁴ 7, 2028.

ty and possibilities – they were comparable to town parishes and court preacher positions.

In places related to border castles the interplay of the communities and preachers must have been as complex as illustrated above, even if we know fewer details of these stories than in the case of royal free cities, for example. Practically no direct documents remain from this environment, making it all the more important to value and thoroughly analyse indirect sources on the border castle Reformation, which can be interpreted theologically (e.g. the sixteenth-century biography of Szegedi Kis).¹⁷ These are the detours through which these so far blank patches in Hungarian Reformation research can be mapped out.

LOCAL BORDER TRAFFIC IN THE JAGELLONIAN EMPIRE

In the Duchy of Teschen four roads from Wrocław, Kraków, Buda and Vienna meet, and people from four ethnicities, Czech, Polish, Slovak and German interact with each other. The three historical regions Silesia, Northern Hungary and Moravia are joined near Teschen, even though legally they belonged to different kingdoms. This was due to the personal union in the states of Matthias Corvinus (1440-1490), the Jagellonian dynasty and Ferdinand I,¹⁸ when they were part of the same political structure. They were similar in terms of economy, culture and language and even started forming connections between their churches prior to the Reformation: Czech subjects received canonries in Hungary and vice versa. Due to the Hussite schism the Hungarian administration made a more or less successful attempt to separate Moravia and Silesia from Prague and govern these territories directly from Buda. Matthias Weber (*1961) provides considerable data on this issue in his monograph.¹⁹

At the time of the appearance of the ideas of the Reformation, the network of the towns of Northern Hungary had already been well-established. It is hard to tell what came first: whether it was the movement of goods (in this direction the export of copper and wool, and the import of baize), which in turn determined the personal careers and mobility of craftsmen, which then led to the formation of family and business ties; or whether it was the other way round. In the fifteenth century, when attendance at university spread, students started using already beaten tracks. This road network was modified but not completely demolished by events such as the Hussite schism (which diminished the role of Prague) or Matthias Corvinus's conquests and the expansion of the Jagellonian Empire (due to which the Hungarian-Moravian-Silesian connections became even more important).

17 Szakály: *Mezőváros és reformáció*, 97-171; Óze: *Reformation und Grenzgebiete*, 125-280.

18 Ferdinand I. (Alcalá, 1503 – Vienna, 1564): BBKL 18, 404-14; MBW 12, 52-4; NDB 5, 81-3; TRE 11, 83-7.

19 Weber: *Das Verhältnis Schlesiens zum alten Reich*.

Modified power structures explain that these connections also affected church institutions through the exchange of clerics. Humanist networks were formed on this basis between the centres of Vienna, Olomouc, Wrocław, Kraków and Buda. The only change resulting from the appearance of the Reformation movement was the decrease in the attendance of the region's universities, as most of the students moving on the well-established route up to Wrocław or Leipzig chose Wittenberg as their destination.

Hence, the geographical environment of the events and phenomena of the Reformation in Hungary is predominantly the Moravian-Silesian-Hungarian region. Its actors mostly moved around this area and their multiple linguistic-cultural-political identities also tied them here. Probably only in one instance does this early history of the Reformation of Hungary go beyond this regional framework and enter the European dimension. This was during the time of the 1548 Diet in Bratislava, when the political power relations of the Holy Roman Empire had a direct effect on the question of religion in Hungary.

In the early stages of the Reformation the channels for the flow of information were the following: books; students; Humanist letters and people traveling, crossing borders and taking jobs abroad.²⁰ The first signs of Luther's Reformation appeared in Hungary in 1521-2. Banská Bystrica and Levoča sent the first students to the university of Wittenberg (1522).

The alliance of Humanism and the Reformation in Hungary was deeper and proved longer-lasting than in the Holy Roman Empire. The country had but a single intelligentsia, and a single author (usually a teacher at city schools, a preacher or a tutor for a noble family) would write both Humanist literary and reformist religious works. The prestige Erasmus had acquired made him the determining influence in the first decades of the Reformation. Later Melancthon was to become the decisive figure and point of reference.

One could consider the letter written by Bartholomaeus Francfordinus Panonius (1490-1536), the notary of Banská Štiavnica, on 19 May 1522, as the first example of Humanist support for the Reformation in Hungary. In this letter, the author, having just returned from "Babylon," i.e. Rome, greets Conrad Cordatus (ca. 1480-1546),²¹ who by that time had become convinced of the teachings of the Reformation, such as *Cunradum nostrum*. The letter then comments on Luther's alleged summons in Nuremberg: "The emperor holds an imperial gathering in Nuremberg, where our Luther (*Lutterus noster*) is invited too, who is to be blessed by the Lord Jesus, of whom he is the most steadfast preacher".²²

20 Hein: 'Die Ausstrahlung der Wittenberger Reformation'.

21 Conrad Cordatus (Hertz) (Leombach, 1480 – Stendal, 1546): BBKL 1, 1125-6; MBW 11, 303; NDB 3, 356-7; RGG⁴ 2, 459.

22 ME 1, 57-8 (Nr. 56); cf. Csepregi: 'The evolution', 17-19.

The Diets of 1523 and 1525 each dedicated an article to the sanctioning of the new heresy. As elsewhere in Europe, language barriers constituted a major obstacle in the spread of the ideas in Hungary.

The first conclusion drawn from the data of the early Reformation is related to ethnicity: the first reformers were native Germans or German speakers, or, if this cannot exactly be determined about everyone, the people in question all lived and operated in a German-speaking environment. All the sources originate from German-speaking environments. These were mostly towns with a German population or among German-speaking miners, and royal courts, which were multilingual due to dynastic connections. The majority of these linguistic utterances have been preserved in German (and to a lesser extent in Latin). Although the language of the administration of the state and church was Latin and the Humanist letters also preferred the classical language, administration in towns was conducted in the native language of the local majority population, which was also used for private letters.

Closely related to this, the second conclusion is of a geographic nature. Before 1526, four centres of the Reformation were formed in Hungary: Sopron, Buda (with the royal court), mining towns in Northern Hungary and royal free cities in Northeast Hungary. The town of Sopron, situated at the border of the Hungarian and German language regions, played an important role in commercial and cultural transmission. Its trade network extended across Austria and Moravia to northern Italy and southern Germany.²³ The medieval city archives were unusually fortunate in that they survived both fires and the ravages of war. They contain the most detailed records of the inquest launched against alleged Lutheran heretics.²⁴ In the views disclosed during the heretic investigation conducted in Sopron in 1524, traditional Franciscan church critique²⁵ is already demonstrably mixed with ideas originating from Luther.²⁶

Interestingly, despite its geographical proximity and similarity regarding its development, in Bratislava the signs of the Reformation only appear a few years later. The significant difference between the situation of the church in the two towns was that whereas in Sopron the parish priest was the highest church authority, in Bratislava both the chapter and the archdeacon could halt the spreading of the Reformation. It is not by accident that the first data we have from Bratislava on this topic is an execution in 1528, i.e. also from the period after the defeat in Mohács.²⁷

23 Mollay (ed.): *Das Geschäftsbuch*; Grüll (ed.): *Lesestoffe*.

24 ME 1, 159-171 (Nr. 163)

25 Szűcs: 'Die oppositionelle Strömung der Franziskaner'.

26 Csepregi: 'The evolution', 11-6.

27 Beck (ed.): *Die Geschichts-Bücher*, 67-9.

The cultural institutions and international relations of the capital of the country Buda were exceptional. Hence, the processes which took place there cannot be projected onto the whole country. Priests, school masters and diplomats²⁸ who visited Buda did not necessarily automatically become reformers. Still, it was of great significance that the threads of many different networks joined in a single point in Buda, including German native speakers, Humanists, court politicians and the followers of the so-called Evangelical movement. These connections catalysed effects, spread news, mutually connected religious ideas, aesthetic values, and political influence. Queen Mary²⁹ or George Margrave of Brandenburg³⁰, who were receptive to these new ideas, certainly did not act as initiators or organisers, but lifted the role and image of this network to another level by their mere presence and authority. Their enemies promptly spotted this danger, and instantly found the remedy of compromising “the Queen’s Lutheran Germans”.³¹

Most of the people sympathising with the Reformation belonged to the mining towns along the River Hron. The seven mining towns of Northern Hungary became important nodes of an international cultural network primarily because of their economic role (the production of precious metals and copper and the minting of coins). Members of the intelligentsia of these cities were brought in part from abroad, but members of the intellectual elite from the cities often found important positions in distant lands as well. The interests of Augsburg’s Fugger house in copper mining played a significant role in nurturing the close relationship between the town and the Holy Roman Empire. According to studies in the history of reading, the cities were at the vanguard of country in their refinement.³²

Extensive data shows that in the 1520s the city councils of Banská Bystrica, Banská Štiavnica and Kremnica employed visiting preachers at their own cost for shorter or longer periods of time. At the root of this practice there was in several places a tension between councillors with tendencies towards church reform and parish priests who opposed it. In places where attempts to fill the existing positions for priests with “evangelical” preachers were not successful, the city temporarily provided new preachers. According to the investigations of heresy, the books emerging from the German Reformation were also found in these mining towns, as they were in Sopron and Sibiu. During the time of the uprising in the mining towns (1525), the miners – clearly following Luther’s example – used

28 Réthelyi et alii (ed.): *Mary of Hungary*; Fuchs and Réthelyi (ed.): *Maria von Ungarn*; Réthelyi: *Mary of Hungary*.

29 Mary of Habsburg, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia (Bruxelles, 1505 – Cigales, 1558): NDB 16, 207-9.

30 George Margrave of Brandenburg (Ansbach, 1484 – Ansbach, 1543): BBKL 30, 472-84; MBW 11, 192-3; NDB 7, 204-5.

31 Hein: ‘Maria von Habsburg’, 272.

32 Čičaj und Bernhard (ed.): *Orbis Helveticorum*.

Saint Paul's apostolic greeting (Romans 1:7) as a distinguishing sign, and began letters to their friends who shared the same ideas with the salutation "Grace and peace!". The apostolic greeting, just like in the Evangelical movement in Germany, served here as a tool for identification.³³ Apart from this a typical and watchword-like phrase of the new church language was "Christian and Evangelical".³⁴

Compared to the mining towns, such phenomena were scarcer and appeared only later in the royal free cities in Upper Hungary. Thus, a general conclusion can probably be drawn that moving from the west towards the east the signs of the Reformation become sparser and originate in a later period. Transylvania is almost completely missing from this map of the early Reformation, despite the fact that the Transylvanian Saxons also belonged to the German ethnic group as did the population of Spiš County (Scepusium), and that there were investigations into books and heretics in Sibiu as early as 1524, as there were in Sopron.

Comparing the parallel biographies of reformers in Hungary, the similarities in their careers are interesting. They tried reforming their own cities before going to Wittenberg, and the conflicts deriving from these attempts drove them out of the country. Afterwards they made a career in a church in one of the Lutheran provinces, supported by the reformers of Wittenberg. When examining the biographies and theological categorisation of reformers in Hungary, in many cases an interesting problem emerges which is typical to the region. The easiest way of illustrating this phenomenon is through the example of the already mentioned Conrad Cordatus. The ideas of the Reformation probably affected this preacher in Buda through his readings, maybe from 1521 onwards. In 1524, Cordatus preached "against the pope and the cardinals" in front of a prestigious congregation including the royal couple, and as a consequence he had to flee. Just a few weeks later his name can be found in the register of the university of Wittenberg. In the following years he travelled several times to Hungary and Wittenberg, where he became Luther's close colleague, the transcriber of *The Table Talk* and the godfather of Philipp Melanchthon's child. He finished his adventurous life as the Lutheran superintendent of Stendal in Brandenburg.

Due to the lack of sources, the literature tends to anticipate later data and situations. However, it cannot be stated that in 1524 Cordatus preached "in the spirit of Luther"; we can only claim that he held a sermon which was critical of the church, showing the effect of reformers' ideas. It is questionable to what extent these early attempts were "Lutheran". Although the unjustifiable retrospective projections are often due to later memories of the character under examination, it can be proved textually how increasing theological control had a retrospective amending effect. Still, the question remains: what did the reformers mean by the often used term "evangelium" before they came into direct contact with the theol-

33 Csepregi: 'Anfänge'.

34 Csepregi: 'The evolution', 19-26.

ogy of Wittenberg? Naturally, there is no clear answer to this, but that is not sufficient to answer the judgement of their foes: "He's a Lutherist!"

THE BATTLE OF MOHÁCS (1526): THE WATERSHED

According to the sources, the Reformation had a significant effect in the German-speaking environment of Hungary in the period before the battle of Mohács, but data shows that at this time the movement had not yet crossed the German-Hungarian language border within the country. Thus, it can be stated that until 1526 the teaching of the Reformation was restricted to an urban, German-speaking environment. According to the works of the Hungarian speaking reformer Matthias Dévai,³⁵ the Hungarian ethnic group was clearly only receptive to the theological interpretation of the 1526 defeat at Mohács, namely the critique of the veneration of saints. However, I will briefly introduce the ideological and identity crisis following Mohács in connection with another figure, Georg Stoltz.³⁶

In the autumn of 1526, the bishop of Transylvania János Gosztonyi (d. 1527), ordered a heresy investigation against Georg Stoltz, castellan of Hunedoara.³⁷ Stoltz was an Upper Silesian nobleman and member of George Margrave of Brandenburg's court in Jägerndorf,³⁸ who assumed the position of castellan of Hunedoara in the spring of 1526.

On 24 September 1526, the bishop of Alba Iulia ordered three parish priests in his diocese to start an investigation about the "Lutheran" aberration of the newly arrived castellan of Hunedoara. János Gosztonyi listed 12 questions for the investigators.³⁹ On 13 October the three priests gave their detailed report to the bishop about the lifestyle, morals and views of the heretic Stoltz.⁴⁰ The clerics, who knew the castellan well, heard Stoltz call the pope Antichrist; he denied that priests were capable of turning the Eucharist into the body of Christ and propagated the marriage of priests. Moreover, he broke the fast both in words and deeds, he ate meat together with Orthodox Romanians, he questioned the biblical basis for the practice of confession, he claimed that everyone was a priest and could therefore also baptise, and he considered the institution of the church as well as the church made by hand unnecessary.

During the feast of John the Baptist, he pushed away the cross that was extended to him, and laughed when others kissed it. He claimed that saints were humans and villains and that their relics were just junk. He destroyed the picture of Pope Saint Gregory the Great with an axe while he was drunk. He similarly reviled the feasts of the Virgin Mary. He ridiculed indulgences, excommunication,

35 Mátyás Dévai (Bíró) (†1545): BBKL 1, 1276–1277; MBW 11, 345; RGG⁴ 2, 773.

36 Georg Stoltz († Hunedoara, 1530): Csepregi: *A reformáció nyelve*, 113–6.

37 ME 1, 283–8 (Nr. 276–7); Keul: *Early Modern Religious Communities*, 53.

38 Csepregi: 'Notbischof'.

39 ME 1, 283–4 (Nr. 276).

40 ME 1, 285–8 (Nr. 277).

the holy water, the morning and evening Ave Maria; he denied the Purgatory, and claimed that nobody but the Son of God may enter into Heaven.

Seemingly authentic testimonies give an account of the coherent behaviour of a professed heretic, who was openly critical towards the church. The scandalous words and protesting deeds of Stoltz can indeed be placed in the framework of the Lutheran teachings.⁴¹

The testimony of the priests reported above was confirmed by the fellow castellans of Stoltz and the other officers of the castle. They even heard Stoltz blame Saint John of Capistrano (1386-1456) and the Hungarian saints, as well as the Holy Blood of Bába (a shrine to which miracles are attributed in Hungary), for allowing Buda and the country to be taken over by the Turks. However, this statement was obviously already reflecting on the defeat at the battle of Mohács and the detailed reports about the death of King Louis II,⁴² as well as the ensuing political and military situation and the spiritual crisis of the country. Patron saints, relics, holy kings, and even Mary the *Patrona Hungariae* all failed and proved unworthy of the trust placed in them, thus the state ideology and symbolic representation based on them wavered:

Where are these villains: St John of Alexandria and St John of Capistrano and the other Hungarian saints? If they are saints, why do they not protect Buda and the country from the Turks? And where is the Holy Blood of Bába? How can this kabbalah blood [*Kabala Werh*] scorch and destroy its own shrine and Hungary, if it is holy?⁴³

It was based on the same logic that one generation later, in 1543, the defenders of Székesfehérvár held it against the failed saints that there was no help:

The villainous citizens, who blasphemed the saints of God, took Peter and Paul, who had been carved out of wood and lined with gold for remembrance, out of the church and the people tied a rope around their necks, took them to the city walls, hung them on a hook outside the wall, and told the statues: Now help us, villains, and we will believe you.⁴⁴

Questioning the veneration of saints gives a theological answer to the political and military situation and the identity crisis of the country. From this ground Dévai arrived at the denial of Hell and of Purgatory, a new image of Mary and a

41 Cf. similar charges in the 1524 heretic investigation in Sopron. ME 1, 159-71 (Nr. 163); Csepregi: 'The evolution', 9-10.

42 Louis II. King of Hungary and Bohemia (Buda, 1506 – Mohács, 1526): NDB 15, 381-2.

43 ME 1, 287 (Nr. 277). King Louis II. went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Blood in Bába before the battle, at the end of August 1526, and the Turks robbed the Abbey of Bába a few days after the battle. MHH.S 1, 118.

44 MHH.S 1, 393.

new way of creating solidarity with the saints. In a broad framework of the history of ideas, the innovative thoughts of Dévai can be interpreted in the context of the thousand year old Christian tradition of “Soul-sleeping”.⁴⁵ The social impact of Dévai’s famous theory of “the sleeping of saints” at the time of crisis following Mohács cannot be emphasised enough, since Dévai explicitly stated the political consequences of his religious arguments:

Clerics preach in a stentorian voice that Stephen, the first king of Hungarians, offered the country to the Virgin Mary. Hence, even the embossing of the coins present her as the Patron of the country. However, if this is true, I tell you that the king had no idea about the nature of the faith, i.e. that it turns only to God and fixes its gaze only on Christ, ignoring the saints and the Holy Virgin.⁴⁶

Let us take a look at the positive teaching deriving from the denial of the traditional hierarchical world view. What are the new merits Dévai attributes to the dead, rid of their glory? And who will the believer, stepping out of the guardianship of saints, be able to turn to for help, if this believer now has no faith whatsoever in blind, deaf and helpless souls, similar to those sleeping?

It is clear that only the heavenly Christ can intercede for sinners, but on Earth no one is left alone to their own resources for here Christians mutually pray for each other. Instead of invisible advocates, Christians gained visible ones, and instead of dead bones (relics), they gained living ribs (cf. Gen. 2,21) and brethren. In the eyes of God nobody was smaller or greater, nobody was closer to the fire or marginalised. Helping and assuming responsibility was mutual and the basis for a new sense of community, which as a mobilising ideology proved able to compete with the traditional *Patrona Hungariae* doctrine and the cult of saints, traditions which were facing a crisis. Reports about the Church living under Turkish occupation which were read with a lot of enthusiasm across Europe also convey this spirit, and this is also the basis on which theological systems were formed in the second half of the sixteenth century, reflecting a world view typical of border castles.

THE REACTIONS OF THE FOLLOWERS OF THE OLD FAITH

The 1548 Diet of Bratislava dedicated eight articles to church issues. Due either to misunderstanding or convenience usually only one of these laws is mentioned, namely the one according to which Anabaptists and Sacramentarians (those subscribing to the Calvinist Eucharistic doctrine) should be expelled from the country. Contrary to the interpretation prevalent in the Protestant historical tradition, there is no mention in the Article about sparing the followers of the

⁴⁵ Ács: ‘The Theory of Soul-sleeping’.

⁴⁶ Dévai: *Disputatio*, fol. b4r.

Augsburg Confession. The basic purpose of the legislation was to reform the Roman Catholic Church. This included the provision that bishops should visit the local churches, they should examine whether the priests who celebrated mass and received the benefice had been properly ordained; they should check what the teaching was like and place properly ordained priests into service. Thus, all those local churches where bishops or the king's commissioners found situations which were in contrast with the objectives of the law were in danger. The communities where the Lutheran Reformation had already been accepted and their priests had applied to be ordained in Wittenberg or another Protestant church were especially endangered. Bishops were also instructed to punish those unworthy of service, i.e. those who were serving without proper ordination. Calling to account and forbidding was only one side of the provision, however. The other side was building the Church: the prelates were supposed to place into service in every market town and village parish priests who knew the and taught the true doctrine and delivered the sacraments according to the rite of the holy Catholic Church. Taking all the above into consideration, in 1548 the law in the Hungarian Kingdom began the Catholic Reformation.

It is interesting to examine the connection between the launching of the Catholic reform in Hungary and the *Formula reformationis*, dated 14 June 1548, submitted by the Holy Roman Emperor to the Diet of Augsburg, and accepted. Commonalities are the significant role played by King Ferdinand I in the creation of these provisions and that by the word "reformation" they meant the re-establishment of the Catholic tradition. In the view of this fact, it is completely incorrect to assume that the religious law of 1548 in Hungary provided any protection for the followers of the Augsburg Confession or those pretending to follow this tradition.

In order to present if not an extensive selection but at least a representative sample of the language of the followers of the old faith,⁴⁷ I have thematically categorised the data of seven heretical investigations or reports.⁴⁸ These are relatively large both in terms of teaching and in terms of time and place. The purposeful recording of data shows great variations: it covered all the historical regions of the country and spanned the first two decades of the Reformation in Hungary. Among the authors of the texts there are not only clerics serving in various functions with different educational backgrounds, but also a lay citizen. Among the heresies presented are teachings that could be accused of Anabaptism, Spiritualism, and other radical schools.

It is necessary to evaluate the informants of the old faith. The charge book put in front of Dévai, which was compiled by Johannes Fabri⁴⁹ bishop of Vienna and

47 Csepregi: 'The evolution', 26-8.

48 Sources: Csepregi: *A reformáció nyelve*, 451-4.

49 Johannes Fabri (Leutkirch/Allgäu, 1478 – Baden/Vienna, 1541): BBKL 1, 1588-9; MBW 12, 37-8; NDB 4, 728-9; RGG⁴ 3,3-4; TRE 10, 784-8.

his colleagues is by far the most precisely formulated text, which avoids stereotypes and concentrates on the theses *actually* propagated by Dévai and is therefore truly professional work.⁵⁰ Regarding the other texts, however, it is hard to decide whether the heresies described in them resemble more previous interrogations of witnesses or the actual situation examined. Therefore, solely based on the records of the followers of the old faith the dilemma of the real and literary analogy would be unsolvable, i.e. whether the heretics interrogated followed each other's false doctrines or the interrogators copied each other's files.

The records typically consider heresies as a denial of a traditional doctrine and rarely try to positively elaborate on the heretical doctrines. The interrogated heretic "despises" or "disparages" this or that doctrine, according to the interrogators showing off their rich vocabulary in the field. On the other hand, it is characteristic of the opinions of the interrogated subjects that the motivation for the denial or rejection of traditional doctrines can be threefold: it is not commanded in the Gospel, it is not necessary or useful for salvation, or that it is simply invalid. Using a later terminology, it can be said that the teachers of false doctrine under investigation classified several aspects of the traditional church doctrine or religiosity as *adiaphora*, the category of in-between things, i.e. among those norms of behaviour which otherwise have an important role in everyday life or an important social function, but were, however, neither commanded nor forbidden in the Scripture. They might be useful for the community, but neither adhering to them nor ignoring them would influence eternal salvation.⁵¹

The thematic categorisation of charges enables the identification of the intersections of heretic investigations and hence also those of the heretical doctrines. The two most important topics were clearly the veneration of saints, which occurred in all the records and the fast, which appeared in six of the texts. There is increasing evidence that since the ideological crisis after Mohács partially explains the success of the Reformation in Hungary, the question of the cult of saints should be regarded as the central issue involved. However, what role did the question of fasting – the most fiercely debated topic in Zurich – play in our context?

The problem should again be examined from the point of view of the followers of the old faith. The reason that these topics gained such importance was the scandals relating to them: Georg Stoltz smashing Pope Saint Gregory the Great's picture with an axe when he was drunk and the citizens of Székesfehérvár hanging statues of Peter and Paul outside the city walls with ropes around their necks. Similarly, the recorded testimonies also provide extensive details on who, in what company and in which period of fast consumed butter, eggs or roast meat. On the other hand, the denial of Purgatory, for example, or the question of the absolution

50 ME 2, 264-7 (Nr. 233-4).

51 Szegedi Edit: 'Was bedeutete Adiaphoron / Adiaphora?'

of deadly sins do not relate to such spectacular elements or to causing scandals demonstrated as prophetic deeds.

The deeper reason, however, for the emphatic treatment of these two main topics is that they were closely connected to the profane rituals of everyday social life. The questioning of the veneration of saints undermined, on the one hand, the order of time provided by the calendar, and on the other, the spatial relations in connection with holy places, churches, altars and shrines. The rejection of the fast also intervened with the cyclical division of the week and of the year. Whoever abused the saints attacked not only an article of faith or simply the state ideology, but as a public enemy threatened the everyday life and the order of the closer community.

This explanation is supported by the fact that the two issues mentioned are preceded by the following: regular confession (occurs five times); rites, such as bell ringing, morning and evening prayer, feasts (four times); churches, altars, pictures (also four times) – that is, issues which were related to orientation regarding time and space. Although regarding a different dimension, communal life was also structured by church authority (occurs five times) and the clergy (also five times). The spectacular and scandalous rejection of the latter was monks quitting their orders and the marriage of priests. Therefore, it was justified that the followers of the old faith considered the teachings of the Reformation a frontal attack on their familiar world and the destruction of the system of social relations.

Only one popular topic is missing from this framework of interpretation: the Eucharist. Also occurring five times, this brought the harshest words to the lips of its critics: trick of the Devil; idol. The preachers of the Reformation were unable just to label this question as “not necessary” or “not commanded”. According to them, this was no longer an *adiaphoron*, but the key question of true worship deriving from pure teaching, hence in the interrogation of Dévai in Vienna, four points dealt with the problem of the mass. Whereas the rest of the above-mentioned topics reflected the values and points of view of the followers of the old faith, with regards to this question, the reformers’ opinions as well as their linguistic power come into light.

THEOLOGY AND LANGUAGE USE

It is characteristic of language use in sixteenth-century Hungary that the written and oral languages often differed, and translation from one language to the other was not such a natural and widespread practice as in later centuries. In parallel multilingualism every language has its own well-defined place and function, and is not freely interchangeable with other languages.⁵² Therefore, a separate set of

52 Kubinyi: ‘Ethnische Minderheiten’; Bak: ‘Linguistic Pluralism’; Szende: ‘Integration through Language’.

concepts and formulae were created for idioms used in parallel with each other in the period of the Reformation, which affected each other only to a small extent. Latin served as the lingua franca and people living in the same country seldom learnt each other's mother tongue (apart from those aristocratic and intellectual families which due to their family relations were already multilingual). In larger towns and cities Latin and German clerks worked to answer incoming letters according to the language they were written in, but they only translated from one language to the other in exceptional cases.

Our sixteenth-century reformers had a restricted knowledge of modern languages, but did at least have excellent Latin skills. The originally bilingual reformers, such as the Transylvanian Saxon Gáspár Heltai, are an exception.⁵³ Others did not learn German very well, even after spending many years in Germany. Dévai even admits this. This characterises even more the students who after six months or a year returned from the universities. Although it was equally easy to get by with Latin everywhere, everyone preferred an environment similar to their mother tongue. The custom for parents to send a student somewhere "for the sake of the language" is a later development, and the demand among the middle class to know "the languages of the country" came even later.

Among the processes discussed here it is necessary to touch upon the role of Latin. In Reformation research the current authoritative interpretation is that theological debates leading to denominational differentiation can be explained partially by language differences: between Scholastic Latin and Humanistic Latin, Upper German and Low German dialects, and the richness of Latin terminology in contrast with the more restricted terminology of vernaculars. A certain part of this linguistic approach is also well-known in Hungary, namely that Hungarian students who were good at Latin but did not speak German preferred Melancthon's lectures and Latin sermons to Luther's mixed-language exegeses and German sermons. The problem is even greater, however. Theological terminology already existed in Latin, but did not exist in vernaculars at this time. I am referring not only to small languages such as Hungarian here, since the theological differences between the Latin and German versions of the Augsburg Confession are also partially a result of this. Theological debates, competing and contrasting arguments could not be conveyed in vernaculars or only with significant distortions. Whereas Dévai's teachings are clearly formulated in his *Disputatio*⁵⁴ written in Latin, for example, in his Hungarian language catechism they are vague and unclear. Hence it is not the theological debates themselves and the contrasting views of the Reformation which are formulated in vernaculars, but rather the waves stirred up by the debate.

53 Caspar Heltai (Helth) (Cisnadie, 1515? – Cluj, 1574): NDB 8, 508; RGG⁴ 3, 1622.

54 Dévai: *Disputatio*.

Probably it is the observation of these details – language skills, translation culture, lack of theological terminology, mother tongue-based and region-based interconfessional organisations – which will lead to the answer to the most important and to this day basically unsolved question of the history of the Reformation in Hungary. That is: why did the vast majority of the ethnically Hungarian population in the sixteenth century become followers of the Helvetic Confessions, unlike other ethnic groups in Hungary? For now, my attempted answer is this: Hungarians, in their relative linguistic isolation, went their own way. They were, of course, influenced by the Swiss and Southern German examples, and the medieval and humanistic heritage is also demonstrable to some extent.⁵⁵ The route of the triumphal procession of the Helvetic theology (from the occupied territories to the Transtibiscan region, then from there to Transylvania, and finally to Western Transdanubia and Upper Hungary) makes it obvious that the Turkish invasion and the border castle battles also had a role in this story,⁵⁶ maybe even the increase in the economic significance of market towns, since Bernd Moeller also demonstrated similar parallels between processes in social history and in the history of ideas during the German Reformation.⁵⁷ Additionally, the independent development of original theological thinking in the Hungarian-language Reformation and unique materials in the texts of Calvinist creeds in Hungary are evident.⁵⁸

The leaven of this theological fermentation was – as has long been known to historical research – the Hungarian student association of Wittenberg. Taking a close look at the list of members of the Hungarian student *bursa* of Wittenberg, it is apparent that unlike the university nations, it was not organised on a regional basis, but based on mother tongue: there were very few non-Hungarian surnames among them, and these came from regions with a linguistically heterogeneous population.⁵⁹ Although the Hungarian *bursa* kept its records in Latin, its members generally interacted with each other in Hungarian, thus excluding their compatriots with differing mother tongues.

This language-based, at first theological, later denominational differentiation led to obvious ethnic mistrust and conflict by the end of the sixteenth century. Research shows that in these theological debates, ethnic prejudices also played an important role accelerating the process of denominationalisation along the borders between different mother tongues. It is known that denominational identity was not created by creeds, but theologically indifferent elements, such as the

55 Bernhard: *Konsolidierung*.

56 Szakály: 'Türkenherrschaft'; Fodor: 'The Ottomans'; Óze: *Reformation und Grenzgebiete*; Spannenberger: 'Konfessionsbildung'.

57 Moeller: *Reichsstadt und Reformation*.

58 E.g. BSRefK 2/2, 1-165 (Nr. 58).

59 Szabó Géza: *Geschichte des ungarischen Coetus*.

mother tongue (*adiaphora*).⁶⁰ This made it possible to refer to the religion “of Cluj” (Calvinist) and that “of Sibiu” (Lutheran) in sixteenth-century Transylvania, and this is how the “Hungarian religion” of the Calvinists and the “German and Slovakian religion” of the Lutherans came into long-term existence in the whole country.

OUTLOOK: CHURCH STRUCTURE, CREEDS AND DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

The frameworks for Protestant churches started to be organised from the 1540s (first south and north of Lake Balaton, in towns of Upper Hungary and in Transylvania). The leader of these larger units even ordained priests, in other words he functioned as a bishop. In some regions (e.g. in Transdanubia) Protestant congregations were formed on the site of the Roman Catholic Church, whereas in other places (e.g. in the Transtibiscan region) a great number of parishes joined the new faith.

In sixteenth-century Royal Hungary the Protestant churches did not yet formally separate from the Catholic Church. Lay authorities connived at them, but this fragile peace based on a mutual spirit of compromise without a legal insurance was recurrently endangered. Public recognition for Protestants was granted first in the 1606 Treaty of Vienna which then became law in Article I of 1608.

The most important point of theological orientation was the University of Wittenberg. In the sixteenth century over a thousand students from Hungary attended it. The creeds formulated during the first synods of Lutherans (Synod of Arad 1545, Synod of Prešov 1546, The Reformation of the Transylvanian Saxon Churches 1547, *Confessio Pentapolitana* 1549, *Consensus doctrinae* 1557)⁶¹ primarily showed the impact of Philipp Melanchthon.⁶²

Before the approval and announcement of the Decrees of the Council of Trent (1563) a broader, rather flexible interpretation of Catholicism prevailed, tolerating differing opinions and practices in relation to a number of aspects of the rite of the Church. The creeds listed were all within the framework of this Catholicism. Besides the Scripture, they willingly referred to traditionally authoritative figures (in general or by name), especially apostolic and church fathers, but sporadically also to scholastic theologians and collections of canon law.

Similarly, in the spirit of the humanist school reform of Melanchthon, a network of Lutheran and Calvinist schools (consisting of over a hundred institutions of secondary education around the year 1600) was established by re-organising existing Latin schools and founding new ones. Noble patrons and city magistrates provided the financial basis while teachers trained at foreign universities ensured high standards of education. Among the secondary schools the *lyceums*

60 Szegedi, 'Was bedeutet Adiaphoron / Adiaphora?'

61 BSRefK 1/2, 439-48 (Nr. 33); ME 4, 522-4 (Nr. 497); cf. Csepregi: 'Konfessionsbildung'.

62 Scheible, 'Melanchthons Beziehungen'; Ritoók-Szalay, 'Warum Melanchthon?'; Hein, 'Melanchthons Bedeutung'.

of Sopron and Bratislava, and the *collegiums* of Debrecen and Sárospatak, all of which also taught academic subjects, permanently excelled.

The decades following the Treaty of Vienna of 1606 were characterised by flourishing Protestant church life and culture, which can primarily be gauged by considering the publications of the time in Hungary. While for Calvinists and Unitarians books were published in Hungarian and Latin, for Lutheran churches and schools large quantities of books were published in four languages (Hungarian, German, Czech and Latin). Moreover, even devotional literature was produced – for individual reading or reading out loud at home.

It has become something of a cliché in the historiography of the German and Hungarian Reformation that the ideas of the Reformers exerted a fundamental influence on society, in part because they were expressed in the mother tongues of the congregations and in part because of the medium of printing. Neither of these two factors was entirely new at the time, but together they released energies that until then had not been seen. We can assess the dimensions of the linguistic event by examining bibliographies of the re-printings of individual texts, but the question remains as to whether or not contemporaries were themselves aware of these processes. One of the most prominent representatives of the Reformation in Hungary, Gáspár Heltai, definitely was, for in his work entitled *Háló* [Net], on the 1538 religious debate of Sighișoara, he used a metaphor that is poetic but also captures the storminess of the new uses of language: “And at the time here and there the word of the Lord began to flash like lightening, both in Hungary and in Transylvania.”⁶³

ABBREVIATIONS

BBKL = Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz et al. (Hg.): *Biographisch-bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, 1-38, Hamm: Bautz, 1990-2017. www.bbkl.de

BSRefK = *Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften*, 1-3, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002-2016.

ME = Vince Bunyitay et al. (ed.): *Monumenta ecclesiastica tempora innovatae in Hungaria religionis illustrantia*, 1-5, Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1902-1912.

MBW = Heinz Scheible et al. (Hg.): *Melanchthons Briefwechsel. Kritische und kommentierte Ausgabe*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1977– <http://www.haw.uni-heidelberg.de/forschung/forschungsstellen/melanchthon/mbw-online.de.html>

MHH.S 1= *Monumenta Hungariae Historica. Scriptores*, Vol. 1, Pest: Eggenberger, 1857.

NDB = *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953–. www.deutsche-biographie.de

RG⁴= *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. 1-9, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, ⁴1998-2009.

RMNy = Gedeon Borsa et al. (ed.): *Régi magyarországi nyomtatványok*, 1-4: 1473-1670, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971-2012.

TRE = *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, 1-36, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974-2007.

63 Heltai: *Háló*, 130.

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ABSTRACT (UK)

Reformation in Hungary: Historiography, research problems, methodology

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The first signs of Luther's Reformation appeared in Hungary in 1521/22. The Diets of 1523 and 1525 each dedicated an article to the sanctioning of the new heresy. Language barriers constituted a major obstacle in the spreading of the ideas in Hungary also. The first reformers were without exception German natives or German speakers, and people living in a German speaking environment. Before 1526, four centres of the Reformation were formed in Hungary: Sopron, Buda (with the royal court), mining towns in Northern Hungary and royal free cities in the Northeast region. Moving from the western to the eastern part of the country the signs of the Reformation became more sparse and originate in a later period. Until 1526 the teachings of the Reformation only spread in an urban, German speaking environment. According to the works of the Hungarian speaking reformer Matthias Dévai, the Hungarian ethnic group was clearly only receptive to the theological interpretation of the 1526 defeat at Mohács, namely the critique of the veneration of saints. Patron saints, relics, saint kings, and even Mary the *Patrona Hungariae* failed against the Turks. The state ideology and symbolic representation based on them wavered. Thus the questioning of the cult of saints gives a theological answer to the political and military situation of the country and its identity crisis. The veneration of saints was the most frequent, most important issue in the heretic investigation files originating from this period.